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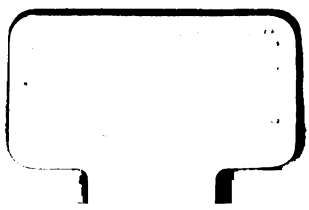

CHRISTIAN REASONS

OF A

MEMBER OF THE CHURCH OF ENGLAND

FOR BEING

A REFORMER.

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BY

ROSS D. MANGLES, ESQ.

"Pessima res est errorum apotheosis: et morientis intellectûs habendum est, si vanis accedat veneratio."— Lord Bacon.

LONDON:
LONGMAN, ORME, BROWN, GREEN, AND LONGMANS,
PATERNOSTER-ROW.
1840.

968.

LONDON:
Printed by A. SPOTTISWOODE,
New-Street-Square.

PREFACE.

IT may obviate misconstruction to explain, at the commencement of this essay, that if there be any appearance of egotism in its style, it is attributable solely to the nature of the subject, and to the manner in which it was suggested to me; not to any absurd notion that my mere opinions, unsupported by valid arguments, are entitled to any weight with the public, or are worthy of being laid before them.

Persons with whose purely religious sentiments I entirely concur, and whose personal piety commands my highest respect, have frequently expressed their surprise that I could reconcile my political with my religious opinions; and, above all, that I could feel justified in making common cause, for political objects, with men generally alleged to be hostile to the Established Church, if not to Christianity itself. And

I have been asked whether I did not feel misgivings as to the soundness of my opinions upon public affairs, and to the nature and tendency of the measures to which I was giving my support, when I found myself associated in such respects with individuals whose principles and conduct, regarded in a religious point of view, I could not possibly approve.

Such considerations as these, urged upon me by such persons, could not fail to excite anxious reflection in the mind of any one desirous to have "a conscience void of offence towards God and "towards man;" and they have accordingly led me to examine, with the utmost care and attention, not once only, but repeatedly, the ground on which I stood. These examinations have not merely confirmed my assurance in the general principle, that the virtues or vices of the individual members of a political party are the worst possible medium through which a sincere enquirer after the truth can attempt to estimate the distinctive views and measures of such an association; but have entirely satisfied me that those political opinions,—commonly called liberal,—which too many religious persons misunderstand, misrepresent, and denounce, are those which alone the

Gospel will sanction, and by which alone, consequently, the true cause of vital godliness and charity can really be advanced.

But as these examinations of my ground have cost me considerable time and thought, as many are prevented by want of leisure, or other causes, from following the same course for themselves, and as I know that mischief has resulted from the facility with which some have allowed themselves to be persuaded that regard for the interests of religion, or of the Established Church, requires them to abandon or modify their liberal political opinions,—I have been led, by a deep conviction of the truth and moment of the principle laid down in my motto, to embody in the following pages the considerations by which my own mind has been made up with respect to the more important religious-political questions which are now engaging public attention; in the hope that what has satisfied me, may tend, in some degree, to strengthen the hearts of others, for that which is not the least difficult of Christian duties,—perseverance in conscientious right-doing, in opposition to the judgment and counsels of many—both laymen and ministers,—who are entitled, on the highest grounds, to our love and reverence.

CHRISTIAN REASONS

FOR BEING

A REFORMER.

One cannot mix in general society, especially if we converse with ministers of the Church of England, without finding it assumed, almost as an axiom, that political opinions of what are called a liberal character, accordant, in the main, with those of the present Government, are inconsistent, not only with a sincere attachment to the Established Church, but with a deep and devout conviction that the religion of the Gospel of Jesus Christ is "the one thing needful" to the real interests of mankind, with orthodox sentiments regarding the essential mysteries and doctrines of Revelation, and with earnest personal piety.

It appears to me, that either from an insufficient sense of the injury which such an impression is calculated to inflict upon the cause of political truth, or from that unwise pride which will not stoop to correct misapprehension, no adequate pains have been taken to convince those whose minds are not closed against reason,—though their

views on the point referred to are unhappily distorted by prejudice,—as well as to assure those timid and scrupulous persons whose public principles are in danger of being overborne by the weight of religious authority, (that is, the authority of undeniably religious individuals), that the religion of the Gospel, and the most liberal political opinions which sound judgment will warrant, are so far from being irreconcilably opposed to each other, that the latter are, in fact, the necessary offspring of the former, when brought to bear, in the spirit of its Divine Author, and in its full benevolent development, upon the great field of social improvement.

Is it because I am a Christian that I am to think that to be right which my reason—which owes to religion the acuteness of its moral perceptions,—assures me to be wrong; or to oppose myself to measures which approve themselves to me as fraught with temporal blessings to my fellow countrymen? Am I to call evil good, and good evil, because a Socinian or a Deist has an understanding sufficiently enlightened, or, it may be, a heart sufficiently benevolent, to strive by my side for the obviation of the one, or, for the attainment of the other? Can such a mere circumstance as the character of one's associates in the pursuit of a public object, divest such an object of its intrinsic value? And even admitting,—with reference to an argument often urged by well-meaning persons against those who think and act as I do,—that such associates will not

stop, where I propose to stop, on the attainment of the good, but intend to proceed—making use of my aid by the way,—to the perpetration of evil ends,—surely the religion which actuated Paul to "rejoice" when Christ was preached "even of "envy and strife," must approve of my making common cause with any man, whatever his ulterior objects may be alleged to be, for the benefit of our common kind. When the alleged bad motives of my associates manifest themselves in action, I will as strenuously oppose, as, up to that point, I have co-operated with them; and I doubt not with the better success, because I have not sinned against conscience, and displayed an unworthy misgiving of the Divine Providence, by resisting good lest evil should ensue: for I can never be persuaded that any thing but mischief can result from giving battle to the supposed enemies of religion and good government upon ground abstractedly untenable, because it is assumed that such parties are on their march to attack some really sound and valuable position. Those whose reverence for truth and justice is not so strong as to render it impossible that they should strike a single blow in defence of what is wrongful, by whomsoever assailed, are not worthy to occupy the humblest post in any contest in defence of the essentials of Christianity.

Take, as the most apt of illustrations, the case of the Established Church in Ireland. As a sincere member of the Church of England, I have every disposition to support the sister Establish-

ment; and being deeply impressed with a sense of the magnitude and danger of the errors under which, according to my conviction, our Roman Catholic brethren labour, I am most desirous that what I believe to be the pure religion of the Gospel, and the best form of ecclesiastical polity, should so flourish in Ireland, as to embrace, in the shortest possible time, its whole population. But can I, because I entertain such opinions and aspirations, think that the transfer of all the ecclesiastical property in the island from the pastors of the people, to the ministers of a petty minority, was other than an act of scandalous spoliation? Can I wonder that the fruits of a measure so unrighteous have been bitter and poisonous; and that a curse and not a blessing has followed it and the shocking penal laws,—fit offsprings of such a parent,—by which the system was carried out? Is it not certain that the wrongs involved in that system have been powerful enough to arrest in their course even the chariot wheels of the truth; and that, consequently, the members of the Established Church bear at present a considerably lower relation to the whole population of the island than they did a century and a half ago? Can I doubt that even now we ought to repudiate the evil deeds of our Fathers, and to wash our hands, as far as may be, in innocency, by making restitution to those whom we have wronged?

It is just because I am a Christian, because I feel that "the name of God and his doctrine have "been blasphemed" on account of the misdeeds

of our ancestors and our own, that I lament the wrongs which have been committed in Ireland under the specious plea of strengthening the cause of truth, and earnestly desire that those wrongs should be redressed. If I were an enemy to Christianity, I should rejoice at the evil which has been wrought, and which is still actively working, under the sanction of its name; and should zealously support the party in State and Church which struggles to perpetuate it. For he must have studied God's Word, and the world in which we live, to very little purpose, who does not perceive that the really formidable enemies of the cause of truth are not those who openly repudiate it, but those who make it a stalking-horse for unworthy ends, and those who, however sincere in their errors, perpetrate injustice under its supposed sanction.

Ingenuity may be defied to produce any key to the religious state of Ireland other than that it is the result of the grievously-mistaken policy, too often carried out into positive and shocking wrong-doing, of the supporters of the Established Church. In other lands, the truth of the Gospel has achieved its most glorious triumphs in opposition to secular power, and when all the wealth of the Church was in the hands of the followers of the Pope. In Ireland alone has been seen the marvellous phenomenon of the truth crushed down into absolute impotence by the officious aid of the whole power of the State, and the whole wealth of the Church. For three centuries the Established

Church has been dominant. She has tried every form of persecution, short of the stake and wild beasts. She has endeavoured to work with the help of penal laws, and without the help of penal laws. For a great number of years she prevailed on the State to exclude Roman Catholics from all political office, and, till a recent date, from all political privileges. For the last ten years the State, overborne by the natural reaction of oppression, has been compelled to abolish all such disabilities; but the result has been lamentably uniform. The whole land has been one wide battle-field of religious animosity, and the truth has lost ground.

Now, the two great political parties into which the community is at the present day divided, hold the most widely different opinions regarding the causes and remedies of the existing condition of Ireland, as far as that condition is attributable to religious or ecclesiastical circumstances. The party which calls itself Conservative, not only sees nothing to lament, and nothing to redress, in the actual relation of the Established Church to the general community, but considers its continued enjoyment of the temporalties of the whole island to be an object of vital importance to the interests of true religion, and, therefore, to be maintained at all risks. Some go still greater lengths, and would, if they could, recal the concession of 1829, and again render the profession of the Roman Catholic faith an incapacitation for political office. But I shall discuss the question of toleration in

the sequel: I would confine myself, at present, to the temporalties of the Established Church.

Reformers think that these temporalties were wrongfully acquired in the first instance, and that the lapse of time—since it has only served to increase the original numerical disparity between the members of the Established Church and the Roman Catholics,—has not given any valid sanction to the abuse. Many, probably, of the liberal party do not suppose that it would now be practicable to make restitution; but all are agreed that the transfer of ecclesiastical property, about which we are treating, was originally a grievance, and is a grievance still, and that every feasible means should be employed to remedy or alleviate it.

As a Christian man, solemnly bound to reverence and follow whatsoever "things are true, "whatsoever things are honest, whatsoever things are just," how can I hesitate for a moment as to which party I ought to join with regard to the question of the Irish Church? Spoliation, the transfer of what was righteously the property of the depressed many to the powerful few, so far from being sanctified, appears to me to be rendered ten thousand times more hateful by the circumstance that it was perpetrated, and is persisted in, with a view to support that which I believe to be the true faith of the Gospel. As a Catholic Christian, I repudiate with abhorrence the notion that the possession of such an "accursed thing" as wrongfully acquired wealth, can possibly be a source of strength to the Church to which I belong.

On the contrary, it seems to me to be as clear as moral demonstration can make it, that the retrogradation of the truth in Ireland is mainly attributable to the crushing reaction of the injustice committed by those who profess it. Surely nothing else could so utterly have palsied its heaven-born energies. Where has the prophecy, that "ten "acres of vineyard shall yield one bath, and the "seed of a homer shall yield an ephah," had so complete a spiritual fulfilment as in Ireland. Yet there are many in the Conservative party upon whose minds the experience of nearly three hundred years of temporal wealth and domination, and of disgraceful spiritual defeat, has been so entirely lost, that they speak of the maintenance of the Established Church of Ireland in all its emoluments, as not merely indispensable to the stability of the true faith, but as affording the only hope for the conversion of the Roman Catholics, and, therefore, necessary for their real good. Mr. Gladstone takes this position unequivocally. "It "appears not too much to assume," he says,—after admitting that we "maintain in the possession of the Church property of Ireland the ministers of a creed professed by one ninth of its "population,"—"that our imperial legislature has "been qualified to take, and has taken in point of "fact, a sounder view of religious truth than the "majority of the people of Ireland, in their destitute and uninstructed state. We believe, accordingly, that that which we place before them, "is, whether they know it or not, calculated to be

" beneficial to them; and that if they know it not " now, they will know it when it is presented to " them fairly. Shall we, then, purchase their " applause at the expense of their substantial, " nay, their spiritual interests?" It seems never to have occurred to Mr. Gladstone that protestant benevolence might have offered precisely the same boon to the " destitute and uninstructed" Irish, without compelling them to pay for it, or perverting to the use of a small minority the great national religious fund. This, in my judgment, would be the only mode in which it could be " presented to them fairly." How would St. Paul have treated a proposition that the Pagans of Ephesus or Corinth should be compelled to maintain him, whilst he preached the Gospel in their cities? Are the Roman Catholics of Ireland further from the kingdom of heaven than the worshippers of Diana of the Ephesians; are the doctrines of our Church more true and more precious than those preached by St. Paul?

Strange are the self-deluding modes by which able and honest men reconcile themselves to a state of things, which, when exhibited in its naked enormity, must shock even those who take the most narrow view of it. " When foreigners," says Mr. Gladstone, " express their astonishment at " finding that we support in Ireland the church of " a small minority, we may tell them that we sup- " port it on the high ground of conscientious ne- " cessity, for its truth." We support it! We do, indeed, support it in one lamentable sense; the

safe enjoyment of its temporalties is secured to the ministers of the Established Church by the troops of Protestant England; but a very large proportion of the pecuniary support of those ministers is necessarily drawn from the capital and industry of the Roman Catholics, who compose four-fifths of the community.*

Is this just; can it be acceptable to that Being who has declared that the offering of the fruits of wrong-doing as a sacrifice, is emphatically hateful in his sight?

But it is argued that any reduction of its temporal wealth would tend to the weakening, if not directly lead to the destruction, of the Established Church; and that this, and not merely a measure of equal justice, is what the Roman Catholics really aim at, and, with the aid of the liberal party, hope to compass. As a corollary to this position, all men of liberal politics are openly accused by some, and secretly suspected by many more, of latitudinarianism in religion, in other words, of general indifference as to the truth.

I have already said that to suppose that the

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* Even if Roman Catholics did not own an acre of land in Ireland; if the whole soil, instead of a large part of it, had been wrested from those who, as Dr. Johnson truly said, "have "been uniformly plundered and oppressed;" and if the penal laws had been so framed and executed as never to allow them to recover any of it; the injustice of diverting a great public fund to the benefit of a petty minority, would be equally great. Protestants too often acquired the land by sheer robbery; it is scandalous to make their possession of it an argument in justification of the transfer of the tithes.

temporalties of the Irish Church, acquired as they were, and enjoyed as they are, by the spiritual pastors of the petty minority, can really promote the cause of true religion, is to mistake the swollen limbs of the œdematous patient for the powerful muscles of vigorous health. For the rest, as I cannot read men's hearts, I do not pretend to predicate with certainty what the views of the Roman Catholics of Ireland may be; though that charity which "hopeth all things, and believeth "all things," ought, I think, to render general the persuasion which I entertain, that they seek nothing beyond what they are justly entitled to. But it seems to me to be a proceeding worthy only of those Jesuits whose reputation is so deservedly infamous, to refuse to comply with such a demand, because we fear that the applicants will proceed to ask, or will strive to extort, something to which they are not justly entitled. Surely, we shall not be the less able to repel iniquitous aggressions, because we have not been defeated,—and in such a contest defeat is certain,—in an attempt to resist just claims, under the vain imagination that wrongful possessions can be made an available outwork for the defence of our real rights.

I proceed to discuss another important point connected with the Church of England. I refer to the question of Church Rates. As a sincere member of the Established Church, I have, of course, a pecuniary interest as strong—in propor-

tion to my means—as that of any other individual, in maintaining the existing system; but it is just because I am a member of, and a cordial well-wisher to, that Church, and endeavour also to regulate my conduct by the principles of the Gospel, that I feel that the existing system ought not to be maintained.

With the point of abstract right I do not meddle. It is doubtful; and a cess which cannot be enforced in any parish, unless the parties liable to pay it have previously agreed to tax themselves, cannot be said to stand on a very secure basis. But the concession of abstract right to those who would uphold the present plan of maintaining the edifices, &c. &c. of the Established Church, does not affect the principle of my objections to it.

It is undeniable that great numbers of our Christian brethren, and amongst them very many whose lives, though they have seceded, on conscientious grounds, from the Established Church, are in admirable accordance with the spirit of the religion which we and they profess, consider the exaction of rates for the maintenance of the fabric of that Church, from them and others who seek no benefit from its ministrations, to be wrongful. It is equally certain that the parties thus objecting have plausible grounds for their dissatisfaction, since Church Rates, being levied upon all newly created wealth, as well as upon property existing at the time of their institution, manifestly do not stand upon the same footing of right as the Tithe; and that the members of the Church of England

have superabundant means for defraying all the charges of their own religious worship.

These postulates being conceded,—and I do not desire to lay any particular stress upon the second, which alone is capable of being gainsaid, in respect to degree,—it is quite evident to me, that if the precepts of the Gospel are practically to govern our conduct, we members of the Church of England ought to abandon all claims on the score of Church Rates upon our dissenting brethren.

No duties are more clearly laid down, or more strongly enforced in the Gospel, than these:—to make every possible concession even to the prejudices of our brethren; to manifest the utmost disinterestedness in pecuniary matters, especially when such matters are connected with the preaching of the Gospel, and we possess, therefore, the means of rendering it in the highest degree acceptable to those with whom we have to do; (of which line of precept Chapter IX. of the First Epistle to the Corinthians affords a striking example;) and so to "provide for honest things," not only in the sight of the Lord, "but also in the sight of men," that gainsayers may be put to silence, and that all men may be compelled to confess that the religion of Jesus Christ is not one of mere profession, but of vital practical principle, manifesting itself in self-denying love.

Many of the texts by which such precepts are inculcated are of the strongest and broadest character. We are told that "Charity seeketh "not her own;" "now, therefore, there is utterly

"a fault among you, because ye go to law one "with another; why do ye not rather take "wrong? why do ye not rather suffer yourselves "to be defrauded?" Pages might be filled with corresponding injunctions. I am well aware, of course, that some of the texts which bear directly upon the points under consideration cannot have been intended to receive a strictly literal interpretation. But they must have some meaning; and I confess that I do not see how any application of them to the affairs of life, which does not prohibit the enforcement of such a claim as that of Church Rates, against brethren who think it unjust that they should be compelled to pay them, can be other than a mockery. Is it possible that the same religion which actuated St. Paul to labor for years for the spiritual benefit of the Corinthians, without requiring them to contribute even to his food or clothing, lest "he should hinder the Gospel of Christ," can sanction us in compelling unwilling brethren, who have ministers of their own to support, to bear an equal share with us in the expense of repairing our places of worship and the like, which we have ample means of doing for ourselves? Do we not know that the enforcing of such a claim must have a necessary tendency to irritate our brethren, and thus to cause them to offend? Can we doubt that it must prejudice them against the Established Church, into which, as sincerely persuaded of its superior excellency, we must wish to draw them? Finally, can we be in any uncertainty whether it be the more Chris-

tian course to abandon, or to maintain, a disputed pretension of such a character?

Limits, I know, there must be to concession; but it appears to me that in the case in question there is such a preponderance of weighty considerations in the scale of Christian liberality, as to remove all doubts with respect to the course proper to be taken. The only question appears to be this: admitting that our strict right to tax our dissenting brethren is unquestionable, are we or are we not willing, for the sake of love and peace, and in order to "adorn the doctrine of "God our Saviour in all things," to exonerate them, and to undertake the whole charge ourselves? It seems to me that all Gospel motives are on one side, and only those of Mammon on the other.

Surely this is a glorious opportunity for convincing the world that we are Christians in more than the bare name. Why, then, are not Church Rates, as far as they affect others than members of the Established Church, abandoned? The cause of their being upheld is, that the party which is called Conservative acts as one man in binding this burthen upon the backs of the reclaiming Dissenters, and in declaring that they will never consent to relieve them. On the other hand, those who are called Reformers concur in general opinion,—however they may differ as to the plan to be substituted for the existing system,—that those who dissent from the Established Church ought not to be compelled to pay Church Rates.

Here, again, I cannot, as a Christian, be in any doubt as to which party is entitled to my support. It is vain to tell me that many Reformers are irreligious men, and that Conservatives are the only true friends of the Church, when I see the latter acting, in a most important and pressing practical matter, in such a manner as, in my judgment, to tarnish the character, not only of that Church, but (in the eyes of men) of Christianity itself, whilst the former are earnestly urging a sacrifice on my part, and on that of my fellow members, which would, I am convinced, if freely and speedily made, tend more than any act of modern example to the glory of the Gospel of Jesus Christ.

Most of the principles which I have endeavoured to establish in the foregoing pages, are applicable to many important particulars in respect to which it appears to me that the Church of England needs reform. In my judgment, for example, the property of the Church, apart from its tithes, is most ruinously administered: decisive measures should be taken to put the matter on a better footing, and to give to the Church at large, and not merely to a few of its ministers, (protecting the rights of actual incumbents,) the full benefit of the improvement Again, I cannot but think that the incomes enjoyed by several of our prelates, even under the existing mode of managing the property of the Church, are much too large; and that in this case also, the interests of the general body, and not those of its chief spiritual pastors, should be consulted.

But in these, as in other like instances, I find

the two great political parties altogether at variance. The Conservatives hold that in the case of our prelates, as in that of the Church of Ireland, wealth is strength; and that it is essential to the dignity, nay even to the respectability, of the principal overseers of the Church, that in their dwellings, equipages, and retinue, they should be upon a par with our temporal nobility. All interference with the property of the Church is also protested against, though it is manifest that nothing but such interference can rescue it from mismanagement, and thus secure to the community the full benefit of existing endowments; and one chief ground of resistance, and the grand reproach against those who are striving for reform, is that men who are said to be irreligious, or to be enemies of the Established Church, are engaged on the same side of the contest, with a view, it is assumed, to the weakening and ultimate destruction of that institution.

It appears to me, however, to be altogether inconsistent with a spiritual view of the question, or even with a rational view of what is confessedly a spiritual question, to suppose that wealth in large masses, much of which is expended by a few individuals in a manner which it is extremely difficult, to say the least, to distinguish from worldly pomp, can be otherwise than positively injurious to the highest interests of the Church. The present disposition and expenditure of that portion of the property of the Church is certainly an offence to many sincere Christians; it is equally

undeniable that it gives occasion to scoffers to contrast the existing circumstances of the principal ministers of the Gospel with those in which they stood, and chose to stand, when the Church was purest and most effective, in terms which, whatever I may think of their spirit, strike me, I confess, as being painfully true. On the other hand, it is unquestionable, that owing principally to lay impropriations, for the effect of which the Church is in nowise responsible, there do not exist, in many places, any thing approaching to adequate funds for the maintenance of a minister of the Gospel; and that, in other places, the great increase of population has rendered the original provision of means for the ministry of the Word altogether incommensurate with the wants of the people.

Such being the state of things, and the opinions of the Conservative party, how can I but take my post in the ranks of their opponents? If it be true that some Reformers desire to destroy the Church of England, and regard the diminution of the incomes of our prelates as a means to that end, it is any thing rather than a matter of regret to me, that the error of religious Conservatives should be counterbalanced by a corresponding error on the part of those of the opposite party, who are alleged to be irreligious, and to have bad ulterior objects. I feel assured that such enemies, if such there be, will far better serve the true cause of the Church, than its mistaken friends. I have, therefore, no misgivings about the motives of my

associates, being entirely convinced that if there be any who are disposed to use the successful achievement of the measures of reform which I desire, as a stepping-stone to unjust aggression upon the Church of England, they will find that those measures, the effect of which they now miscalculate, have greatly added to her legitimate strength, by purifying her from abuses, and by thus deepening and widening her hold upon the reasonable affections of the most intelligent members of the community.

Thus, and thus only, can a spiritual body be really strengthened for spiritual purposes. What I desire, what thousands of the best friends of the Church desire,—though many have been frightened by the cry of "the Church is in danger," or deluded by a fallacious sense of duty, founded on the allegation that some or most Reformers are irreligious men, into suicidal alliance with the enemies of all reform,—is that all the available temporalties of the Church, including the surplus incomes of several of our prelates, and the improvidently managed landed and other property of dignitaries in general, (not including parochial tithes, applied to parochial purposes,) should be judiciously apportioned and administered for the benefit of the whole body. That is the principle: whether the enhanced income which would be derived by improved management from the latter source should be applied to the objects which are now provided for by the Church Rates,—that cess being abolished,—and other like questions, are

matters of practical detail. I should be inclined to maintain the Rates,—as a levy upon the members of the Church of England alone,—and to apply all savings and gains to increase the real efficiency of the establishment. But to principle and practice alike the Conservatives, as a body, are opposed; and, therefore, I am a Reformer.

I now approach a branch of my subject still more momentous than the important points discussed in the foregoing pages, and respecting which it appears to me that a great number of truly pious and most estimable persons entertain opinions with regard to the principles of Christianity, in their relation to political duty, so erroneous as altogether to vitiate their practical conclusions.

I refer to the question now exciting such intense interest, whether the right of a citizen, possessing the requisite civil qualifications, to enjoy political privileges, such as the elective franchise, or eligibility to sit in Parliament, ought to be in any manner or degree dependent upon his religious belief, or want of belief.

It is thought by many,—and those, too, eminently religious men,—that to maintain the negative upon this proposition, is shocking impiety. It is said, that by admitting our Roman Catholic fellow subjects to an equal, or nearly equal, participation in political privileges, we have forfeited, or greatly weakened, our national claim to the blessing of God; that we are, indeed, either actually in, or

on the very verge of, a state of national apostacy from Him; and that any further assertion of the denounced principle,—such, for example, as a corresponding concession to the Jews,—would consummate our guilt. These sentiments are held, of course, by different individuals in different degrees; but they are entertained, in one degree or another, by all that most powerful section of the Conservative party, which is under the influence of strong religious principles, and, therefore, by very many of the most exemplary and useful ministers of the Church of England.

Nevertheless, it may, I think, be shown that these opinions have not only no authoritative basis in the revealed institutes of Christianity, but that they are opposed to the fundamental principles of that religion.

I would state the position which I hold in these terms: It is not essential to the Christianity of individuals (in the absence of which all pretensions to corporate Christianity must be mockery), that the government under which they live, or of which they form a part, should profess the best, or any, form of Christianity; it is essential to the Christianity of individuals (without which, again, there can be no corporate Christianity worth contending for), that their political and social conduct towards their fellow subjects should be regulated by the principles of the Gospel. I maintain as a corollary, that we have no warrant in the New Testament for the assumption that—even allowing the religious creed of the Church of England to

be unmixedly true, and her polity that of the primitive Church as settled by divinely inspired men,—the State acted or acts in conformity with the will of God by excluding any class of men from an equal participation in civil privileges, on account of their differing from that standard in any respect or degree.

It appears to me that the whole question is begged by reasoners of the Conservative party. They assume, as axioms, that God intended the true Church to be politically dominant in this country; that the maintenance of what is called "Protestant ascendancy" is essential to the spiritual welfare of that Church, if not to the personal religion of its members; and that we are merely carrying out the will of God, and are, consequently, justified in maintaining that ascendancy by any means short of what they admit to be persecution.

I shall endeavour to show that these assumptions are altogether gratuitous; and to prove, at the same time, the positions which I have laid down.

We know that when that which was undoubtedly the true Church was founded, and for many following years of its purest existence, the faith on which it was established, and which it taught, was so far from being politically dominant, that those who professed it were held in the most profound contempt, and were subjected to the most cruel persecutions, by their idolatrous rulers. We know, also, that during that period the Church

not only flourished internally,—beyond all parallel in after ages, under more prosperous temporal circumstances,—but that the triumphs of the truth were constantly progressive, and that the religion of the masters of the world, with all its attractions, was unable to hold its ground in the hearts of their subjects against those humiliating doctrines which were "mighty through God."

Not only, however, were the doctrines of Christianity humiliating; some of its precepts were not less repugnant to human wisdom and pride.

One set of these enjoined submission to "the "powers that be," and to "every ordinance of "man for the Lord's sake;" and this at a time when the sceptre of the whole civilised world was swayed, with partial exceptions, by a succession of the most sanguinary and abominable monsters that ever, in the inscrutable wisdom of Providence, were invested with the power of trampling on and tormenting their fellow creatures.

Nevertheless, the command was, submit, and wait God's good time for comparative temporal peace and comfort; and the result of obedience was, that, in the midst of much temporal trouble and suffering, the spiritual interests of the Church pre-eminently prospered.

We are placed in very different temporal circumstances, but still the analogy of faith and obedience can alone guide us to right conclusions and consistent conduct.

We live under a sytem of government which has vested great power in the representatives of

the people; and which, absolving the Sovereign from direct responsibility, imposes it upon the servants of the Crown, the choice of whom, again, is virtually dictated by the representatives of the people.

Now, the question which this state of things suggests with reference to our present inquiry is two-fold: firstly, does God positively require that we should exclude those who, in our judgment, do not serve him aright, or serve him at all, from participating equally with ourselves in political power; or is the exclusion of them from such participation, though not absolutely obligatory upon us, justified by the necessity of the case, as a measure of self-defence, with reference either to our temporal peace and well-being, or to our spiritual interests?

Some Conservatives hold, I believe, the opinion indicated in the first, and others that expressed in the second limb of the foregoing question. With regard to the Roman Catholics, either, or both conjointly, may be and are maintained; as respects the Jews,—since it is impossible to fear persecution or temporal interference with our spiritual privileges on their part,—their exclusion can be justified only on the ground of positive moral obligation.

To this latter position, as most strongly maintained, both with respect to members of the Church of Rome, and to Jews, by men of earnest religious principles, I will, in the first instance, address myself.

It is said that the Government is Christian and Protestant, and that it is apostacy, or at least a degree of wickedness very nearly approaching to it, to admit men who are not Christians, or who, being Christians, hold doctrines which we believe to be at variance with the truth in essential respects, to a share in political power.

But, firstly, if it were a duty to submit to the idolatrous and desperately wicked Nero, how can it be a heinous sin to submit, as far as their power extends, to a constituent part of "the "powers that be," in the form of the representatives of the eight millions of our Roman Catholic fellow countrymen?

That Roman Catholics are now, as electors, as members of the House of Commons, and as peers, a part of "the powers that be," will hardly be disputed; that they were effectively, and in a manner undistinguishable from other providential dispensations of God, in that position, when their strength enabled them to compel a very potent and most unwilling administration to admit them to that equality of civil privilege, their title to which we are now discussing, is, I think, equally unquestionable.

But their claims might have been resisted: doubtless, at the hazard of civil war, with all its unspeakable crimes and miseries, and with the absolute certainty of a continued state of dissension, tumult, and armed watchfulness, little better than civil war. So might the power of the Emperors of Rome have been resisted, when it

appeared to threaten the safety of the Church. But we know that such resistance was positively forbidden. Where was the warrant for resisting the power which the result of the struggle undeniably proves that the eight millions of our Roman Catholic countrymen, — strong in their sense of moral, right and of wrong long endured,— possessed? It is lamentable to think that many, otherwise excellent men, conceive that it would have been justifiable to resist this power to the extremity of slaughtering our fellow subjects and fellow Christians; nay, that our not having done so, is unjustifiable.

It will not do to draw a distinction between lawful and unlawful power, to say that the power of the Emperors of Rome was recognised by the laws, whilst the power of the Roman Catholics was not only not recognised, but was positively repudiated by the laws. Because, very many of the Emperors of Rome acquired their power in the most irregular and illegal manner, by mere brute force, by murdering their predecessors, and in contempt of, or in open opposition to, the legitimate authority of the senate; yet still their absolute power was to be obeyed. By what authority is the co-ordinate power of our Roman Catholic fellow-countrymen to be resisted?

It may be attempted to draw another distinction, by urging that, owing to the connection which obtains in this Country between the State and the Church, to admit persons who are not Christians, or who, professing to be Christians,

labour under fatal errors, to exercise political power, is, in fact, to confer upon them ecclesiastical power also, which they would, doubtless, exert to the injury of the truth; whereas the power of the Roman Emperors was purely civil, and they did not even claim any authority in a Church which they did not recognise, and, indeed, utterly despised.

The answer is plain: the despotic power of the Roman Emperors, and their unscrupulous abuse of it, placed all the temporal affairs of the Church, and of its members, absolutely at their mercy. There was no limit to their interference but their will, and the impalpable panoply of the Church's spiritual character. She has the same protection now; and it is sufficient to my argument to show that she is not in a more hazardous predicament.

It would, doubtless, be more agreeable to our pride, and to our natural desire of feeling secure against all hazard of aggression, to keep in our own hands the exclusive management of our own affairs, and also to govern all classes of our fellow-subjects. Further, it appears to our short sight that it would be a most desirable state of things if all our fellow-subjects were of one mind and one heart in matters of religion. But the same Providence which placed the first Christians under a heathen Emperor, has been pleased to permit a very large proportion of our fellow-countrymen to remain members of the Church of Rome. Christian duty prescribes acquiescence in the will of

God in the one case as in the other, -- leaving the consequences in His hands.

God alone can permit the Roman Catholics to obtain the ascendancy for which it is said that they are struggling. Let us resist them by all moral peaceful means; let us especially strive to disarm them by converting them to the truth. We know that measures of an opposite character, directed to the same end, resulted, after an experiment of centuries, in placing them in such a position as to enable them to extort from us that equality of political privilege to which they conceived, and I consider, that they were justly entitled. It seems to be little less than fatuity to anticipate any thing but disgraceful failure from entering a second time upon a course which has once so signally failed.

But if it be the will of God, — of which I can see no probable indications, — that persons professing the religion of the Church of Rome should obtain ascendant power in the government of this country, they can no more deprive us individually of our religion, than they can deprive us of our souls. Yet we hear this danger insisted on as if the blessings of the Gospel could be taken from any man by the same sort of process as temporal possessions, and as if the progress of error could be resisted in the same manner as the advance of an army. At the worst, Roman Catholics can but act by Protestants as the Emperors of Rome acted by the first Christians. It would be a grievous affliction to be so persecuted; but there is no more warrant for avoiding the contingency of persecu-

tion by " false brethren," than there was for avoiding persecution by " the heathen," by à priori resistance to their power. We are as much obliged to render unto Cæsar the things that are Cæsar's, as to render unto God the things that are God's. Under our constitution equal political privileges appear to be the right of every citizen civilly qualified to enjoy them; and it is quite impossible that we can offend the great Lawgiver by obeying His command to render them where they are due.

Human pride, human impatience to incur the most remote hazard of suffering, would dictate such resistance; but I repeat that not only have we already tried, and have utterly failed to effect any repression of error by such means, but that all that authority to which, as Christians, we are bound to bow, prescribes the opposite course: " and who is he that will harm us, if we be fol- " lowers of that which is good?"

Secondly, the command — " all things what- " soever ye would that men should do to you, do " ye even so to them," is most positive, and of universal application. Can we, with any truth, affirm that we acted in accordance with it as long as we excluded our Roman Catholic brethren from equal political privileges? Should we think that we were justly dealt with,—for that is the test in such cases,—if, standing in the same relation to the Romanists as they do to us, they treated us as we treated them up to 1829? If any person can answer this latter question with an unqualified

affirmative, this particular argument loses its force as regards him; but I am sure that I could not conscientiously state that I should be satisfied with such treatment; and I suspect that the great majority of those who protest against the concession of 1829, justify the state of things which previously existed, and which they desire to re-establish, on very different grounds.

Not to confuse the subject with the plea of greater danger to the religion of the State from a Roman Catholic than from a Protestant minority, in possession of a proportionate share of political power,—which I shall notice in the sequel,—it is maintained that the Church of England being the true Church, whilst that of Rome is deeply sunk in error, it is for the glory of God that the truth should be upheld in ascendancy, and that we are, therefore, not merely permitted, but positively bound, so to uphold it.

But I can find no warrant for assuming that the glory of God can possibly be promoted by a course of conduct that appears to me to be a manifest breach of what the Apostle calls "the royal law" of charity, which I have quoted. That command is absolute, "thou shalt love thy neighbour as "thyself." "Love worketh no ill to his neigh- "bour, therefore love is the fulfilling of the law." There is no dispensation from obedience when we may conceive that our fellow-subjects are in error; and that therefore to do unto them as we would not that they should do unto us, would redound more to God's glory than the implicit observance

of His "royal law." On the contrary, it is by obedience alone that we can glorify God.

Further, the Epistles, which are full of practical instructions for the conduct of human affairs, illustrate our Saviour's declaration that "His kingdom was not of this world," by giving no directions to the converts, residing in the cities of Greece and Asia, to abstain from taking part with their idolatrous fellow-citizens in the management of municipal affairs, and in whatever of self-government was permitted by the general system of the Roman Empire. They do not contain the slightest intimation that it was intended that when the proportions should be reversed, and the Christians should become the great bulk, instead of a petty minority, of the population, nor at any intermediate stage of this mutation, the civil rights of individuals should be in any manner affected by the circumstance that they unhappily remained attached to polytheism. St. Paul never hints that the Gospel would be in any respect dishonoured by the sentiments of its disciples being overborne in the town-councils of Ephesus or Corinth, by an idolatrous majority; nor that at any future period it would behove the Christians to assure the ascendancy of their own principles by ousting their opponents. Erastus was not commanded to vacate the chamberlainship of Corinth; "the saints that were of Cæsar's household" were not taught that their duties to God and to man were incompatible; and even in the most intimate relation of marriage, the Christian

husband or wife of a heathen partner was enjoined to respect and maintain the bond of wedlock, and was expressly assured that the children of such a continued union would be "holy." Surely, if St. Paul's standard of Christianity could be maintained under such circumstances as these,—and his converts were positively commanded not impatiently to endeavour to alter them,—we may well submit to our compatriotic union with Roman Catholics, (not of our own seeking, but of Providential dispensation,) and may feel assured that if we perform our part aright, that union of Christian charity will be blessed to us.

For all these reasons, it appears clear to me that God not only does not require, but that He does not even permit us, to exclude those who, in our judgment, do not serve Him aright, or serve Him at all, from an equal participation in political privileges.

Do not let me be misunderstood. I do not speak of these things as matters of no importance, or of small importance. Religious error is most lamentable, and unity in the faith is most earnestly to be desired, especially amongst those who are dwellers in the same land. It must be a grievous sorrow to all sincere Christians to see the government of their native land conducted on other than truly Christian principles. But the matter is a practical one. Erroneous opinions exist; we cannot help their existence; and we have no authority for struggling by other than moral means, still less for resorting to actual physical force, to prevent

those who hold them from obtaining predominance. At present such opinions are held with the tenacity of enthusiastic affection by millions of our fellow-countrymen, (with whom it is a duty of primary obligation that we should live on peaceable terms); and it is equally matter of experience, matter of certainty, that men living under a constitution such as ours, will not patiently submit to exclusion from political privileges, merely because their religious sentiments are more or less at variance with the doctrines held by the dominant, and—as I believe,—the true Church. If those thus excluded be few,—like the Jews,—their complaints and feeble efforts to improve their position will not be heard or attended to amidst the constant whirl and din of political excitement; and in that case, of course, their claims may be safely,—whether justly or unjustly,—resisted. But if, on the other hand, the parties shut out be numerous and powerful,—like our Roman Catholic fellow-subjects,—they will clamour for admission to a full community of privileges in tones which will rise gradually from measured remonstrances to stern demands. And then such theories as those of Mr. Gladstone concerning the unity of the truth, and the conscience of the government, will not be found worth the paper on which they are written. The sole question must be, as it was in 1829, are you prepared to resist the demand of banded millions, with the certainty of unceasing excitement, agitation, and discord, and at the imminent risk of civil war? Reason never so ingeniously,

you will not persuade those who are excluded to acquiesce patiently in their incapacitation. Are you then sure that the Gospel of peace will justify recourse, for the maintenance of Protestant ascendancy, to grape-shot and bayonets? If you will have an exclusively Protestant legislature, you must have Ireland one great battle-field; you must have made up your mind, at least, to shed blood to any extent,—as occasions arise,—for the maintenance of your position. And every attempt to carry the theory of politico-religious unity out into practice, will be attended with a like result, varying in intensity of mischief and misery with the strength of the body which is the subject-matter of the experiment of exclusion.

Here, again, I find myself opposed to the Conservative party, and allied with the Reformers, because I am a Christian. At this moment, the most powerful, because the most highly principled and consistent section of the Conservatives, is loudly demanding the re-imposition of the political disabilities which shackled the Roman Catholics until 1829; and to which, under the Divine blessing upon such righteous policy, they attribute the signal prosperity of the Empire up to that date.*

But I feel it to be a frightful mockery to describe as national prosperity a state of things during

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* See the language of recent Protestant addresses to the Queen, remonstrating against the admission of Roman Catholics into the Privy Council.

which even the external semblance of tranquillity was maintained in Ireland only by the constant presence, and occasional active employment, of an immense military force; and discontent was daily gathering the strength which eventually enabled it to dictate its own terms of political equality. On the other hand, I am sure that if men could be the purest of Christians under Nero and the worst of his successors, I might be a Christian even in the extreme event that the Pope regained all his former authority in Great Britain. But I do not see how I am to be practically a Christian, if I am to live,—and there is no third course,—in a constant voluntary state of angry discord and bloody collision with millions of my fellow-countrymen; and if, though, perhaps, not compelled to use against them, in person, the sword which our Lord forbad Peter to employ even for the protection of His sacred person, I am hiring others to stand guard over them, with orders to put them down, with any necessary degree of bloodshed, if they should attempt to gain by force those equal privileges to which they deem themselves to be rightfully entitled.

Abstract theories may enable others to reconcile such practical conclusions to their consciences. It is not so with me, and, therefore, I am a Reformer.

Again, when a law has been passed admitting our Roman Catholic fellow-countrymen to an equality,—with certain specified exceptions,—of civil privileges, I cannot make common cause with the party, the most powerful and consistent sec-

tion of which demands that that enactment should be virtually annulled, by rendering it practically a dead letter. I am unable to reconcile such a course of conduct with Christian honesty. Whilst the Emancipation Act of 1829 is the law of the land, it is as sacred as the Bill of Rights or the Act of Settlement; and we are under the most solemn obligations faithfully to execute its provisions. Let the persons who are dissatisfied with those provisions, petition for its repeal: I can never unite with the party, which, whilst its more sagacious leaders feel that this is a point which it is imprudent to press, because impossible to carry, thinks that it is justified in requiring that the great executive head of the State, and her servants, should dispense with the law, and practically exclude the Roman Catholics from those privileges for which they have a legal title of eligibility, equal to that possessed by any class of their fellow-countrymen.

I return to examine the question, Is the exclusion from political power of those who do not serve God aright, or serve Him at all, though not absolutely obligatory upon us, justified by the necessity of the case, with reference either to our temporal peace and well-being, or to our spiritual interests?

I have already considered the point of our spiritual interests. They need no such protection. They are in absolutely safe keeping; and we do but endanger them when we dream of adding to their security by any bulwarks of our own erecting.

No such bulwarks,—however ingeniously contrived,—will keep out the utterly irreligious. Men who believe no more of the Bible than they do of the Koran, who will take any oath, subscribe any declaration, and participate in any act of any worship, can never be excluded from legislating for, or from ruling in, a Christian state, or a Christian Church, if united with the State. To that, therefore, which is manifestly the greater evil, the nature of human affairs compels us to submit.

I will not deny that cases may be imagined in which the principle of self-defence might authorize a religious body, actually possessing supreme civil sway in a State, to exclude from political power another religious party of whose determination to persecute, in the event of its gaining the ascendancy, there might be complete moral certainty. In civil matters, the law permits the magistrate to place under constraint persons who have been guilty of violence, and who shew, by their overt acts, that they meditate further mischief to peaceable individuals; and there might, doubtless, be circumstances of political jeopardy (regarding persecution as a civil injury), which would justify an analogous course.

But in the one case, as in the other, and more especially in the latter, it behoves those who have to decide upon such measures,—affecting the dearest rights or claims of individuals or classes, and only to be justified on the ground of their being indispensable for self-protection,— to weigh the allegement of necessity—so proverbially "the

" tyrant's plea,"—in the most jealous scales. Where exclusion from an equality of political privileges is demanded, there ought to be complete moral proof not only that the parties from whom danger is apprehended have been actually guilty, at some former period, of the crimes which they are expected to repeat, but that they possess the present will and power, and that too, not remote and contingent, but proximate, to perpetrate them again. The danger should be imminent, and the impossibility of warding it off, or of protecting ourselves against it, by milder means, indisputably clear.

Now, I am very far from sure that at any period of our history our real position,—alarm and excitement apart,—in relation to our Roman Catholic fellow-subjects, was such as to justify their incapacitation for the enjoyment of political privileges. I am quite certain that we are in no proximate jeopardy of persecution now. Where is the reasonable probability that the Protestant majority of the Empire,—vastly superior in wealth, intelligence, and position, as well as in mere numbers,—and having, as we are convinced, the strength of truth upon their side, will, within any moderate term of years, be overborne by the Romanist minority to such a degree, as to be exposed to wrong on account of their religious persuasion?

And let us bear in mind what it is that the powerful section of the Conservative party, whose views I am discussing, requires the State to do. Not to incapacitate those who have actually

injured us, or our brethren,—as analogy with the case of an assaulter would demand, — for none such, even according to their own showing, have been in existence for the last century and a half; but to provide by a system of rigorous exclusion from political power against alleged danger from the remote descendants of those who persecuted the Protestants under Queen Mary in England, or who massacred them in Ireland in 1641. The proposition which would be rejected as monstrous in a court of justice, is not, in fact, in the least degree less shocking, when gravely addressed, in the way of argument, to a political community.

It is urged in support of this extreme demand upon the State, that a Roman Catholic minority will never rest content, as a Protestant minority would rest, with their fair proportion of political power; that their principles are unchangeably those of intolerance and persecution; and that they wait but for the attainment of power to carry them again into execution. That power, whether they would misuse it or not, it is, humanly speaking, impossible that they should obtain. But how is the position that the persecuting spirit is, and will remain unchanged, supported? By a reference to certain books, bulls, and decrees of councils, which the assumed infallibility of the Church of Rome has fixed permanently upon its records. Contrast such evidence with the happy state of facts amongst our nearest neighbours; and we have only to thank our own evil policy up to 1829, if the

Roman Catholic majority of France are in any degree more reasonable and charitable than the Roman Catholic minority of Great Britain. It is in vain to iterate that "the spirit of Popery is "unaltered," when we know that not only a perfect security of Protestant life and liberty, but absolute equality of political rights and privileges, has obtained for years in the land which was desolated and disgraced by the wars and assassinations of the League, and by the massacre of St. Bartholomew. How am I to believe that the "spirit of Popery is unaltered," when I contrast the present state of Germany with the bloodshed and misery of the Thirty Years War? The manner in which Protestants and Roman Catholics coalesce for all political and social objects in the United States of America affords similar practical evidence. Ought not our conduct in a practical matter to be determined by such evidence, rather than by inferences drawn from circumstances which took place two or three hundred years ago, when Protestants had little, if any, better notion of toleration than Roman Catholics; or from principles and opinions avowed, indeed, theoretically by some, but upon which it is absolutely certain that millions of humane Roman Catholics would indignantly refuse to act?

Again, it is certain that our Roman Catholic fellow-subjects earnestly disclaim any intention — any desire — to strive for more than that political equality which they consider to be their just right. I know that many of those Conservatives

whose opinions I am combatting consider it to be the weakest credulity to repose any confidence in such protestations, which are only, they aver, the insidious language of present weakness, and which would speedily be changed, on the acquisition of power, for the threatening tones and active cruelties of persecuting intolerance. But credence given to such declarations on the part of fellow-countrymen and fellow-Christians, appears to me, I confess, not only not to be a weakness, but to be Christian charity. That charity, when genuine, we are assured by the word of God, "beareth "all things, believeth all things, hopeth all "things." From the present generation, from many generations of our Roman Catholic fellow-subjects, we have had nothing of wrong to bear. All such endurance has confessedly been on their side, as witness the iniquitous penal laws of the last century. Surely, however, if the words that I have quoted mean any thing, we sin against the precept which they convey when we refuse to give credit to the solemn assurances of our brethren. I am writing not to scoffers, but as a Christian to Christian men; and I therefore argue boldly upon Christian principles. If such principles are to regulate our conduct, we are bound, in my judgment, to manifest a generous confidence in the veracity and honesty of our fellow-countrymen, rather suffering wrong, — if such be the requital for our exercise of Christian love, — than jealously guarding against a remote hazard of it, by subjecting our brethren to disabilities,

which grievously irritate them, and cause them to offend. Supposing the case in question to offer only a choice of evils, — political or moral, — can there be any doubt on which side the evils are least? For my own part, I have no fear, looking at the matter as at any other political contingency, of suffering wrong at the hands of the Roman Catholics; but if even a heathen Roman* could say, "if it were always safe to do "right, who would ever do wrong?" most assuredly it behoves Christians to act towards brother Christians upon a principle at least as noble, and with that confiding love, in the absence of which the highest profession of evangelical religion is but "as sounding brass, or a tinkling cymbal."

It is urged, I am aware, that the Roman Catholics have already broken faith with us; that they have not rested satisfied with the boon which the Act of 1829 conferred upon them; and that some, at least, of their number have violated the spirit of the oath under which they have taken their seats in the Legislature.

But, firstly, the Act of 1829 cannot, I think, be regarded as a boon, but merely as a measure of justice; and that, too, withheld, until the very statesmen by whom it had been long denied, and by whom it was, at last, most unwillingly granted, acknowledged that it could no longer be refused. Considering the manner in which we had treated our Roman Catholic fellow-countrymen for centu-

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* Metellus Numidicus.

ries, and their knowledge of the fact that we consented to do them right, solely because it was felt to be no longer safe to persist in doing them wrong, it seems to me to be extremely unreasonable to expect any very warm or enduring gratitude for the tardy and reluctant relaxation of political disabilities.

Secondly, whilst the conduct of Christians ought not to be allowed to depend, in any degree, upon the gratitude or want of gratitude of those towards whom they act, I am not aware that the Roman Catholics generally, or any considerable body of them, have demanded more than I—a member of the Church of England,—think it incumbent on us to grant. And—well knowing that wrong is weakness,— I feel assured that we shall be far better able to resist iniquitous aggression, — if such be intended, — when we have abandoned all ground that is not righteously tenable, and when we have thus taken our stand in a position where none but the unjust can assail us.

Thirdly, even those who have broadly charged certain Roman Catholic members of the Legislature with perjury, have not ventured to brand the whole community of that religious persuasion with that fearful crime; and it would obviously be most unjust to visit upon a body, consisting of many millions, an offence alleged to have been committed by an insignificant fraction of its numbers. But the truth is that many undoubted Protestants, including members of the Church of England,

have openly concurred in the measures, for proposing or supporting which Roman Catholic individuals have been charged with perjury. Those individuals have not pledged themselves to take no part in legislation relating to the Church, but have simply sworn not to injure the Church. Is it consistent with charity,—not to say common sense and common fairness,—to taunt them with the wilful breach of that oath, because they take the same view (for example) of the unjust position of the Church of Ireland, as I and many other sincere members of the Church of England conscientiously take?

I have no fears for the truth as long as those who hold it are content to stand in the strength of their own holy cause, and to fight the bloodless battles of Christianity with those weapons of moral suasion, by which alone—speaking of human means,—hearts can be won. But I do tremble for the present success even of the truth, —though assured of its eventual triumph,—when I see its avowed champions,—and those too often ministers of the religion of love,—forgetting what manner of spirit they are of, appealing from the pulpit or the platform to the passions of their hearers, and labouring to infect the community with the miserable fantasy, that the pure religion of the Gospel can only be defended by armour of earthly temper, and by the engines of political intolerance. Upon such men, experience, however long, however unvaried, is utterly thrown away. They resolutely close their eyes against

the fact, written as with a sunbeam in a thousand different pages of history, that the truth has achieved its most glorious triumphs in despite of temporal power, and when not only those who proclaimed it, but the humblest of its professors, were subjected to every varied form of the most cruel persecution; and that it has never been scandalously defeated, except where,—as in Ireland,—its disciples have madly called in the unhallowed aid of injustice or violence. Their cry is still for exclusive political power for themselves, and for the political disqualification of their opponents. They despair for the truth, unless error be bound hand and foot in political trammels, and consigned to social degradation. I can feel no sympathy either with the fears or with the desires of such persons. The comparative political equality, the existence of which,—though civil war were the alternative,—they denounce as a heinous national sin, appears to me to be the state of things in which the success of the pure Gospel may be expected to be most rapid and permanent. I dread only the ascendancy of those principles of intolerance which they desire to carry out into practice; and this, because all experience has shewn, that the power of the State — when employed in excluding opposing sects from political privileges, — is the worst possible ally to the Church. All that she needs is to be left alone, to the exercise of those energies which Kings or Parliaments can neither give nor take away, without restraint on the one hand, or

officious and partial patronage on the other: but better, far better, if the one or the other be unavoidable, that she should be subjected to persecutions such as the Church of Scotland suffered under the latter Stuarts, and their dissolute and bloody delegates, than that she should be permitted to act over again the disgraceful part which she has performed in Ireland during three centuries of unjust and much-abused domination.

In approaching the contested ground of National Education, the immediate and strongest considerations that present themselves are, first, the extreme narrowness of the differences which now remain to prevent the coalition of all moderate persons for an object of unspeakable public importance; and, secondly, the utter insufficiency of the objections which the organs of the Conservative party in State and Church have taken to the views of the administration, to afford a field upon which men of sincere understandings might reasonably engage in a contest of principle.

Ground enough has, indeed, been taken by some parties for a conflict without quarter; but such space for the exercise of controversy has been obtained only by the most reckless misrepresentation of the plan which is now propounded by the government.

With those misrepresentations, or with the details of the plan before the public, I shall not meddle in this pamphlet. My business is with

principles; and, more especially, to shew why I consider it to be more consistent with my Christian profession to take part with the Reformers than with the Conservatives on the question of National Education.

The matter — like the subjects discussed in the foregoing pages,— is a practical one; not to be disposed of on grounds abstract from the actual political and social state of things. On the one hand, are the high claims, and unquestionably great merits, of the Established Church; on the other, is the consideration justly due to the millions of our fellow-countrymen, who, as Roman Catholics or Protestant Dissenters, do not belong to that Church. It is equally our interest and our duty to educate the children of those of the poorer classes who are members, and of those who are not members, of the Church of England: and the sole question for reasonable men and Christians is not whether it be not desirable that the national Church should embrace the whole nation; not whether the catechism of that Church be not better suited for the religious instruction of the young, than any other manual of the primary doctrines and duties of Christianity; not whether it be not our duty, in the abstract, to inculcate the entire body, rather than any smaller proportion, of truth; but how — circumstances being as they are, and beyond human power to alter,— are we to effect the greatest possible amount of good? It is futile to waste our time in speculating how we might act, or ought to act, if those circum-

stances were altogether different from what they are.

Often as the two have been confounded,— and that, too, by persons of the best intentions,— to do evil that good may come, and, amidst the practical difficulties of human affairs, to choose that course which promises the greatest return of good, though, it may be, with some admixture of evil, are essentially different things. "No com- "promise" is an excellent party watchword, but (except in the rare cases when principles are really at stake,) the use of it indicates a state of feeling as alien as possible from the spirit of that beneficent religion, the greatest human teacher of which made himself all things to all men, that he might win the more. If we are to do nothing for the remedy of existing and undeniable evils, until measures of unmixed and absolute good can be devised for that end, we must wait for another state of being.

In the meanwhile,—whilst conflicting zeal is rendering it impossible that either party should do any thing effectual for the attainment of the object which all profess to have at heart,—precious time is irrevocably lost, and thousands of children are passing on, under the eyes of the combatants, to swell the mass of ignorant, vicious, and scarcely reclaimable puberty, and, eventually, we must fear, to perish for lack of knowledge.

Will affection for the catechism of the Church of England justify me — as a member of that Church,—in holding out, whilst the tares are daily

striking deeper root, against measures which will most certainly conduce to their eradication, because some concession is required from Churchmen, in order to make those measures palatable to brethren in a common faith, who, though they do not agree with me in all respects, nevertheless hold all the essential doctrines of Christianity? Will it be a better excuse for my refusal to unite in a cause where union is essential to success, that the administrators of the public funds devoted to public instruction, acting in the name and on the behalf of the Sovereign, (to whom our articles declare that "the chief government of all estates "of this realm, whether they be ecclesiastical or "civil, in all cases doth appertain,)" require that they be permitted to inspect, in the most inoffensive manner, the schools which receive aid from the State? Will it satisfy my conscience, when another generation shall have grown up in utter ignorance of their duties to God and man, that I have done my utmost to prevent the establishment of a general system of national education, propounded by statesmen who recognise it "to be "the obvious duty of the State to base the edu-"cation of the people on religious instruction," on such pleas as these?

It cannot be the duty of Christians to teach error, but it may well be their duty to teach less than the whole truth, when to attempt to teach the whole to all would hazard the refusal of many to receive any instruction at our hands, especially when the plan, as proposed, affords abundant

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opportunities of inculcating the whole truth upon those who are willing to accept it. St. Paul explicitly tells his converts that he had fed them with milk and not with meat, because they were not able to bear the stronger spiritual diet; and how gently does he attempt to insinuate the first elements of the truth into the minds of the refined and sceptical Athenians! Does the genius of Christianity forbid us—does it not positively require us,—to make corresponding concessions for the sake of promoting at once the spiritual and temporal benefit of large numbers of our fellow-countrymen and fellow Christians?

The state of the discussion renders it necessary to say a few words on the subject of secular education. That such education must be afforded, if we would effectually rescue the great body of the poorer classes from their present degrading and most dangerous condition of ignorance, is certain: and nothing but mischief can result from insisting so long and so loudly upon the undeniably superior importance of religious instruction, as to lead well-meaning people to forget that in this workday world of ours, other knowledge besides that which the Bible affords—however pre-eminent its value,—is absolutely indispensable, both to enable men to understand, and to teach them how to pursue, their true temporal interests. I see no reason to suppose that the Bible contains more for the poor, than it contains for the rich:—that it is fitted to be "the foundation on which history, botany, and "geography, &c. may well be a superstructure,"

for the former*, whilst our schools and colleges direct the latter to exclusively secular sources of secular knowledge. Both systems cannot be right. In my judgment, the Word of God was never intended to be used as a primer to the sciences; and there is always imminent danger,—as Galileo's case alone might prove,—in constraining that Word to vouch for assumed facts in the physical world, which experimental philosophy may eventually demonstrate to be mere fancies.

Having premised these general observations, a few lines will be sufficient to explain why, as a Christian, and a member of the Church of England, I think it to be my duty to side with the Reformers in regard to National Education.

Firstly, it is evident to me that the duty of educating the children of the poorer classes has been too long, and most mischievously, neglected by all parties; that the State and the Church have alike failed to discharge their obligations in this respect; that the latter has been hitherto greatly wanting even towards the children of members of her own communion; whilst the education of all who do not stand in that relation to the Established Church, has been left almost entirely to the casual philanthropy of individuals.

Secondly, it is undeniable, that the present Administration, consisting of, and supported by,

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* See the Bishop of Exeter's Letter to one of his Clergy, dated 24th October 1839, and published in "Woolmer's Exeter "and Plymouth Gazette," and also, I think, in the "Times."

Reformers, is the first that has attempted,—however inadequate the means as yet applied,—to render National Education a national object. It appears to me, that the benevolence, the wisdom, and the sense of moral and religious obligation, which alone—in whatever proportions of combination,—could have actuated those who have undertaken this good work, entitle them to my humble support.

Thirdly, I believe it to be practicable,—if the attempt be made in good faith, and in a spirit of catholic love,—to establish a system of public instruction, in which the sedulous inculcation of all the essential mysteries and doctrines of Christianity should be reconciled with the careful exclusion of all matters of minor moment upon which Christians differ. That it is possible to work such a system, we have the important testimony of the Bishop of Norwich, who vouches, ‘ as the result of his experience, that persons may “ be educated together, though they be of different “ religious persuasions;” and we have also the practical evidence of the Martiniere in Calcutta, and of the schools in Ireland and Liverpool, which are conducted upon the same principle of teaching only the truths of catholic Christianity,—due opportunities being afforded to parents or ministers to instil the doctrines peculiar to their respective forms of belief.

Fourthly, I believe that much more good, upon the whole, would be effected, and that much more evil, upon the whole, would be obviated, by the

immediate establishment of such a system, than by attempting to maintain a claim upon the part of the Church of England to educate, or to be supplied with the means of educating, the whole body of the poorer classes, in the same manner as if the whole nation belonged to that communion. For not only must invaluable time be lost, and hundreds of thousands grow up in ignorance and perish, during the discussion of such a claim; but, as I cannot think that the millions who are not members of the Established Church will consent to be educated upon the terms which its representatives seem disposed to dictate, the State, yielding to their claim, must provide double funds for the education of all recusants, or leave them in their present lamentable condition.

Fifthly, it appears to me, that even the modified scheme proposed by some representatives of the Church,—that the members of every religious persuasion should bring up their children apart, and should receive pecuniary assistance from the State in proportion to their numbers,—though more plausible in principle, would, probably, under the present circumstances of our population, be only one degree less mischievous in effect than concession to the former absolute and exclusive claim. For in all places not large enough or wealthy enough to maintain separate schools for the different persuasions, the scheme in question would issue in the practical exclusion from education, or from any assistance towards education by the State, of that very portion of the community

which, to every other title to assistance possessed by its wealthier neighbours, adds that which ought to be paramount,—of wanting it the most.

Sixthly, I cannot close my eyes to the manifest act, that there is a far greater willingness on the part of Reformers, than on the part of Conservatives, to mediate and adjust the existing points of difference, in order to bring about a general concurrence of endeavour for the attainment of a vastly important national object. I see, for example, that the Committee of Privy Council has made several concessions and limitations in order to conciliate the National Society; whilst that body, on the other hand, has not only raised objections to the admission of public inspectors into their schools, upon what appear to me to be extremely inadequate grounds, but seems also to have forgotten the relation in which the Sovereign stands to the Church, (not recognising her as one of "the authorities" of that body,) and the duty of submission to her duly authorized ministers, who alone, according to our constitution, can be the organs of her will. *

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* The National Society,—notwithstanding the lofty tone in which it has negociated with the Committee of Privy Council, —certainly does not represent the Church. See a very able and temperate pamphlet, recently published by Nisbet and Co., entitled "The Churchman's Protest against the National Society." But the Bishop of Exeter, in the Letter quoted in a foregoing page of this pamphlet, has unequivocally stated, that "in his "opinion no official inspector ought to enter the diocesan "schools without the express consent and sanction of the "Bishop." What would the monarchs of the days of the

Seventhly, I am so far from thinking that those concessions which must precede the establishment of a truly national system of public instruction, would in anywise weaken the Church, that I am convinced that the course of Christian charity which approves itself to my conscience, would tend to increase her moral, and, therefore, her only legitimate and desirable, power. Her great strength would render such concessions graceful as well as safe; their effect would be eminently conciliatory; and they might well prove, under God's blessing, the first step towards those measures of general comprehension, the effectuation of which the wisest and holiest of her children, —from the venerable Archbishop Leighton downward,—have most earnestly aspired after.

Nothing that can in reason be thought a sacrifice of principle is asked of the Church. Let her, at any rate, advance to the point where charitable concession ends, and there make her stand. Hitherto, but little disposition has been shown to abate a tittle of the high demand that she should dictate her own terms of education to the whole body of the people. No terms of compromise have been offered by her dignitaries, with a view to arrange the basis of a comprehensive scheme of public instruction. They may learn from Arch-

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Reformation have said to this doctrine? And how is it reconcilable with common sense, that the authority which appoints Bishops and Archbishops cannot be trusted to appoint inspectors of schools?

bishop Leighton how far a single eye to the glory of God, united with fervent charity, may carry, and ought to carry, a Christian prelate in the heaven-ward path of conciliation. Would that the spirit which animated him were largely diffused at the present day! Would that men would honestly balance the mere punctilios of form and rubrick which are permitted to separate hearts which "love the Lord Jesus Christ in sincerity," and grievously to enfeeble, by dividing, the efforts of each party, against those "weighty matters of "the law" which demand the exercise of the most strenuous united endeavours in the great cause of National Education, upon the grand fundamental principles common to all true Christians! Let the body which is strongest — the Church of England, — make, as is fitting, the first overtures for a brotherly union. Made in a proper spirit — liberally and without distrust,— they would assuredly not be rejected; and the result would be the richest of blessings, not upon one class or another, but upon the whole community, whose safety may, and whose well-being must, depend upon the education which the rising generation of the poorer classes shall receive.

I have thus endeavoured to apply the touchstone of Christian principle to the chief political-religious questions which are now dividing the public mind. I have stated every case with conscientious fairness; I have tried to anticipate, as

far as possible, and then to answer, objections to my line of argument. The careful reconsideration of the whole subject matter which my undertaking has rendered necessary, has served to confirm my conviction, that those persons — many of whom are most pious and estimable, — who are striving to support and advance the cause of religion and the interests of the Church of England, by binding up with them the ill-acquired emoluments of the Church of Ireland, by maintaining the existing system of Church Rates, by resisting further measures of Church reform, by seeking to deprive any class of our fellow-subjects of an equal participation in political privileges on account of their religious belief or want of belief, and by holding out against a comprehensive system of National Education, are, in reality, opposing far more effectual obstacles to the true, the spiritual, triumphs of that Gospel of peace and love, for which some of them would, doubtless, cheerfully "suffer the loss of all things," than the most powerful of its avowed opponents. Those who hold and act upon such views as I have described, are — as far as I can read "the signs of the times," — not wise even in their generation: still less do they appear to me — admitting fully the excellence of many individuals among them, — to have, as a body, adequate notions of the genius and mission of Christianity. As regards the Church of England, her true interests cannot prosper, but as the Gospel prospers. It is no new thing to see a reliance upon temporal advantages issue in

spiritual weakness and degeneracy; nor to find even the best men mistaking the semblance for the reality of strength. "I have long been convinced," says John Wesley, "from the whole "tenor of ancient history, that this very event,— "Constantine's calling himself a Christian, and "pouring that flood of wealth and honor upon "the Christian Church, the Clergy in particular, "—was productive of more evil to the Church "than all the ten persecutions together." Who that knows what Christians were before, and what they became after, that event, will question this position? Yet there are many who cling to wealth and temporal power,—however acquired, maintained, distributed, or exercised,—as if they were the very "articula stantis vel cadentis ecclesiæ." I cannot hold with the men who act, as a party, upon such opinions: they are, almost to a man, Conservatives; and, therefore, I side with the Reformers.

If further considerations were necessary to justify such an alliance to my judgment, they might easily be drawn from the fact that through the greater part of our history the best friends of Evangelical religion, and the best friends of civil liberty, have been found contending, side by side, —though with very different degrees of light as respects the highest ends of moral aspiration,—for the enlarged and enduring interests of humanity. Any general retrospect would open too wide a field, but brilliant instances of modern date are not wanting. Who were the allies by whose powerful aid Clarkson and Wilberforce succeeded, after so

long and painful a struggle, in delivering England from all participation in the accursed slave trade; who were the statesmen at the outset of whose administration, after an exclusion from office little short of a quarter of a century, the yoke of bondage was broken in every colony of the British Crown? Were these noble acts of "repentance "unto righteousness,"—accomplished at a great national pecuniary sacrifice,—effected by those who had long made, and who still make, the names of religion and of the Church the watchword and countersign of their party, and who possessed almost absolute and uninterrupted political power from the date when philanthropy first raised her feeble voice to denounce the horrors of "the "middle passage?" Oh, no! That party, notwithstanding its high professions of religious obligation, found no leisure to attend to the groans of the negro. What the self-styled friends of the Church left undone, was achieved — to the signal glory of the Gospel,—by those whom some have unscrupulously declared, and whom many have too readily believed, to be her enemies. In public, as in private life, acts, and not mere professions, ought to determine for wise men the choice of their allies. When the Conservatives,—as a party,—shall make similar exertions and similar sacrifices for the sake of justice and mercy, I shall then feel it to be my duty to reconsider their claims to the public confidence of a Christian.

London:
Printed by A. Spottiswoode,
New-Street-Square.